

2002 Session Review

A report to citizens of the 15th Legislative District

April 2002



Rep. Barb Lisk
(360) 786-7874



Rep. Bruce Chandler
(360) 786-7960

Dear friends,

The Legislature recently concluded its regular 60-day session. Some progress was made on issues important to our communities, such as water management and regulatory relief for our farm communities. More details are included in this newsletter.

However, the Legislature failed to address critical budget issues facing the citizens of our state that could end up being very costly in the future.

Faced with less money coming in to the state and a \$1.6 billion budget deficit, we offered responsible ways to bring our state's operating budget back into balance. Unfortunately, serious cuts to essential services and a patchwork of borrowed money and one-time revenues were used to pay for ongoing operating expenses.

Our thanks to those of you who continue to write and call with your ideas and questions. We appreciate hearing from you. It's an honor to serve and represent you in Olympia.

Sincerely,

Bruce Chandler
State Representative

Barb Lisk
State Representative

Regulatory relief for agriculture

Our state's farmers were provided a legislative exemption from rules strictly regulating land use along our state's shorelines. These rules would have resulted in an extraordinary financial burden if they had prevented farming activity in the proposed 200-foot buffer zones around streams, lakes and other bodies of water. The shoreline rule proponents had said all along that they did not intend to restrict agriculture activity, but we insisted on getting it in writing, and we were finally successful this year.



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State budget troubling for taxpayers



We knew the operating budget passed last June was unsustainable when it was adopted, and as the state's economy continued to struggle, lawmakers were faced with bringing the budget back into balance.

We were disappointed with the process and the results of this year's budget negotiations. While we fought for a responsible, sustainable budget, this year's budget spends \$1.4 billion more than anticipated revenue.

We disagreed with the spending decisions that were made and voted against this budget plan, which

relies on the sale of future tobacco settlement payments in exchange for one-time cash. This borrowed money will be used to pay operating expenses over the next 14 months, while taxpayers will be paying off the debt for the next 30 years.

This kind of spending puts taxpayers in jeopardy, leaving the state with a \$1 billion shortfall at the start of the next biennium.

Water policy: A small step, a big issue

After more than 200 hours of meetings, Rep. Chandler and Sen. Jim Honeyford helped forge a bipartisan water policy agreement in the final hours of the legislative session. The agreement, while not major, conformed to criteria we wanted early in the process including:

- Do no harm. Too often, actions by the Department of Ecology have unnecessarily burdened irrigators and public water suppliers. New legislation must not worsen the current situation.
- Uphold and protect the integrity of existing water rights.
- Provide more flexibility in the use of water, better management of available water supplies, and significant provisions to increase water storage.

The legislation we passed will facilitate reuse of industrial processed water, which will be helpful to our local food processing plants. It expands the means for water right holders to preserve their water right and simplifies permitting for water storage projects. And it creates a water conservation account where monies would be deposited and held specifically to pay for water storage projects.

Did you know?

- Washington has more fresh water flowing through it than any other state except Alaska.
- Washington's total consumption is only 1.7 percent of the total fresh water that comes into the state annually.

Contact us!

We appreciate the opportunity to serve and represent you. Should you have questions about any of the information in this newsletter or any issue of concern, please contact our offices. Your thoughts and ideas are very important to us.

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